

STOREFRONT

for Art & Architecture

97 Kenmare Street New York, NY 10012 212-431-5795

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 29, 1990

PROJECT ATLAS

An International Competition and Forum

Exhibition dates:

September 18-October 13, 1990

Gallery Hours:

Tuesday-Saturday, 6-8 pm

Opening Reception:

Tuesday, September 18, 6-8 pm

Project Atlas is an experiment to investigate and transform an artifact of the nuclear age, the Atlas missile base.

Exhibitors:

Jean-Marc Abcarius/Christopher Burns*

David Ross Dike

Dis. Jecta Associates: Edward T. McMahon/Francesca Franchi*

Reenie Elliott*

Sargent Gardine/Christian Chambers*

Mark Horton/Dan Pitera/David Gill/Carlos Navarrete*

Irie Architects and Associates: Anthony Dunne/Fiona Raby/Kei'ichi Irie*

Starling Keene

Johannes Knoops

Peter Lang*

James Langford with Sandi Hubbard*

David Leclerc

Patrick Peters, Longoria/Peters*

J.P. Maruszczak*

Erik Monn*

Shayne O'Neill*

Office of Original Zone: Joey N. Shimoda

Pearson Post Industries Defense Entertainment Technologies*

Wellington Reiter*

Jeff Schofield*

Scott Senseney/Todd Senseney

Bob Shepherd/Ladd W. Woodland

Special Projects Office: John Bosch/Gordon Haslett/Gerard Kruunenberg*

Stardust Paradise Studio*

Jeff Yandeborg*

Mark West/Nada Subotincic*

Dan Willis with Merilee Meacock

*Selections by Project Jury, others by Project Committee.

Project Jury

Yito Acconci, Neil Denari, Elizabeth Diller, Patricia Phillips, Lebbeus Woods

Project Committee

Jane Dodds*, Gordon Gilbert, David Hanaway*, E. Maniatis*, Gianfranco Mantegna*,
Leo Modrcin, Carolyn Moskowitz, Kyong Park*, Ken Saylor*, Donna Selene Seftel*,
Julie Silliman, Robert Werthamter*, Calvert Wright

* Committee members who participated in the project selection.

(more)

The project sites are twelve obsolete and abandoned Atlas missile bases existing in the region surrounding Plattsburgh Air Force Base, at the edge of Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Mountains, in New York state. Completed in 1962 and deactivated in 1965, an underground silo was built on each site to house and launch the Atlas, the first of a series of American Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles to carry nuclear warheads. Each silo is 174 feet deep and 52 feet in diameter, with an access tunnel to a rounded, two-story launch control center.

As technological marvels, these missiles and silos are singular remnants of human faith in progress through the advances of science. This military hardware embodies the contradictions and enigmas of the late twentieth century, an epoch that has been situated between hope and fear. Thus despite their present uselessness, the Atlas missile silos may come to be the monuments which define our age. Today, just as these missile bases are obsolete, so may be the ideologies of the societies that invented and supported them. With the ending of the Cold War, the domination by the military of advanced technologies can now be challenged with alternative applications and public practices. And as these new conditions for political, economic, technological, and industrial organization continue to evolve, people may have a phenomenal opportunity to create a new era to coincide with the dawn of a new century and a new millennium.

These are the premises by which Project Atlas invited artists, architects and others to submit proposals for alteration, addition or renovation of these abandoned missile bases in physical and conceptual terms. The artifacts in transformation were to define and project potential social, cultural and aesthetic paths for change from the present to the future.

Of the 140 proposals submitted, 27 works were selected for the exhibition. Wellington Reiter proposes an excavation that will unearth the shapes of hidden silos, a metaphorical process that outlines the rightful access of the public into the hidden world of military technology. David Ross Dike's design for a Biospheric Research Institute that will monitor the vital signs of the earth's biosphere (the pulse of the earth) advocates the positive application of technology to the effort of environmental conservation. Shayne O'Neill proposes to convert a missile silo into a giant flute with an insertion of a flue-pipe apparatus that can be activated by natural wind or forced air currents, transforming an instrument of fear into one for aesthetic pleasure. Mark West envisions an "Endo-Threat Detection Technology, and the emergence of a credible Bio-Yiro Defense posture in an Iso-Paranoic Age of growing eco-lethargy." He transforms the silo into an experimental laboratory to sustain and examine an organic-mechanic hybrid mutation wrought by a highly technological and toxic condition of the environment in the future.

Perhaps the most provocative proposition is the ironic-yet-realistic video entry by Pearson Post Industries Defense Entertainment Technologies in collaboration with Jay

Crichley. They propose the creation of the "World's first post-disarmament weapon technology family entertainment theme park," Nuclear Heritage Park.

As Jay Pearson describes it in the tape:

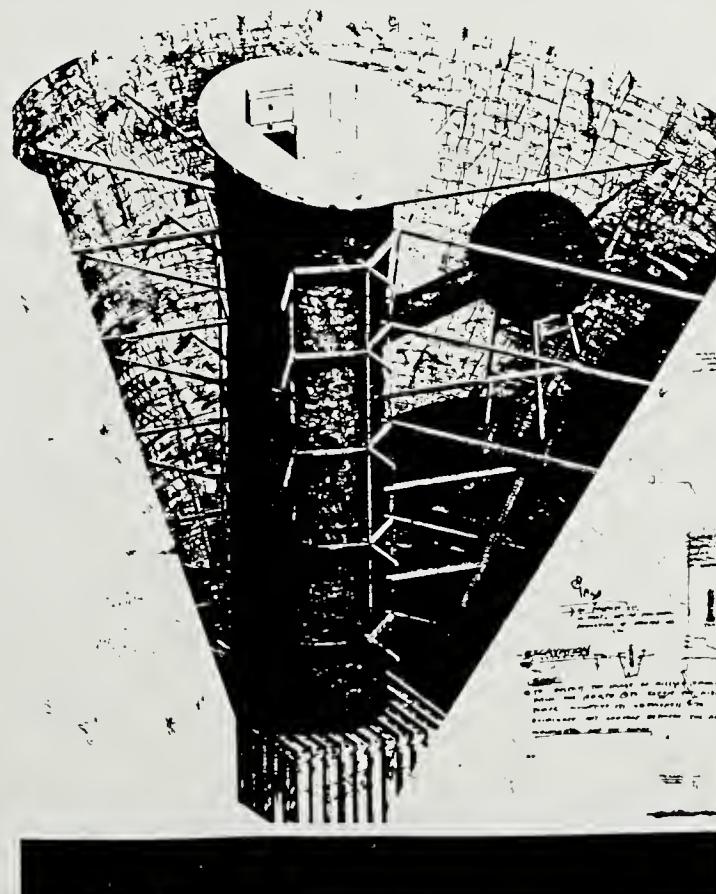
"The park will be filled with fully functional replicas of some of man's most powerful technology, and what was once the technology of death and destruction will be transformed into a hands-on educational and historical look into the political and cultural dynamics of the nuclear age and its heritage: offering exhibitions, rides, amusements and other vacation enjoyments for the whole family. There will be numerous exhibitions of exotic weapon systems collected from all around the world beautifully restored to their original conditions...A full-size replica of the War Room at the Pentagon will be recreated into a state-of-the-art night club, where wars will be played scene after scene on giant multiple screens. Simulators of all models and scales will help to improve your hand-eye coordination and reflexes, and artificial computer reality computer imagings will bring the thrills of high-tech warfare in a highly realistic but completely safe environment."

What compelled us to invent and harness such power? Are these aims indispensable to our progress? Or, are they the final stroke of mortality for all ages? Are they in service to our survival, or are we in service to their existence? These are some of the most enduring questions at the balance between science and humanity, and perhaps we should address them once again through critical examination of these ballistic artifacts.

For additional information please contact:

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• (212) 431 5795

Project Atlas is funded by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts and individual contributors.



Wellington Reiter, *Atlas transformation*, 1990

PROJECT ATLAS

Project Atlas is an international competition organized by STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE, open to the participation of individual artists, architects and groups of interested people in any field. Twelve obsolete and abandoned Atlas missile bases remain in the region surrounding Plattsburg Air Force base, at the edge of Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Mountains, in New York State. The bases were designed to house the Atlas system, the first of a series of American InterContinental Ballistic Missile weapons, capable of delivering a nuclear warhead at a distance of approximately 6000 miles. The bases were operational for only 30 months, from 1962, when they were completed, to 1965 when they were deactivated in favor of a more advanced missile system. Each underground site consists of a steel and concrete silo 174 feet deep and 52 feet in diameter, connected through an access tunnel to a circular, two-story, subterranean control center.

In the bucolic landscape, the sites seem to have been left by an alien civilization. They are monuments to our age, projecting comparable mystery to works such as Stonehenge and the great Pyramids. In their present uselessness, they are singular remnants of human faith in the advancement of progress and technology. The same Atlas rocket put the first American in space, John Glenn; A technological paradigm of the first degree. Concurrently, with its speed and long-range capability, the Atlas ICBM became the first true instrument of global war. This required extremely complex guidance and electronic communication systems. The missile guidance systems perceive and coordinate to the Earth's magnetic field, rotation and the location of sun, moon and stars. This high speed transmission and elaboration of information involved a global network that quickly reduced our planetary conception to the true Global Village.

Project Atlas is a competition seeking to go beyond the creation of innovative designs for new and public uses of the abandoned Atlas missile bases in the North East. If today the arms race seems to have reversed its course, aiming towards disarmament, the 12 abandoned bases serve as metaphor for future issues. Are the silos monuments to a time we have left behind, or will they remain precursors to an empty world. How can communities whose main support comes from the military industrial complex survive in times of de-militarization? The intent of Project Atlas is to interpret the contradictions and enigmas of our age, at the beginning of a new decade and on the threshold of a new millennium: like a mirror, the project aims to reflect and reverse a reality. The project touches some of the most crucial issues in regard to our culture, industrialization and modernism, specifically challenging the formalistic truth and universal beauty embedded in pure forms and functions.

Project Atlas is both an action in the present about the transition of time from the past to the future and a present subject for the transformation of culture from the past to the future. It is time now to acknowledge that this century is over and the past can only be of service for a critical re-examination of how culture has transformed as a direct result of technology . The forum for this re-examination in the case of Project Atlas is in the specific realm of art and architecture. The subject of this project, the Atlas Missile bases, is of our past and should be properly utilized as an instrument to gain critical review of our cultural past. Thereby this project, as present endeavor, is a transitional effort toward a cultural projection into our future, immediately toward the next century and patiently toward the next millennium, through an attempt to transform a cultral emblem of or past into a prediction about our future by a simultaneous act of critical review and creative proposition.

We welcome any proposition and/or ideas in the form of drawings, models, text, concepts or actions. Deadline for entries will be June 15, 1990. The proposals selected by an international jury will be exhibited at STOREFRONT, in New York City, September 13 - October 13, 1990. Media and presentation requirements will be open: two dimensional work should be no larger than 6 square feet and three dimensional work should limit volume to 1 cubic foot. An entry fee of \$10 will be required by June 1, 1990 for each proposal submitted. Selected entries, texts and Jurors' comments will be published in a catalog to be issued in concurrence with the STOREFRONT exhibition. Entrants will receive a copy of the catalog. Arrangements are being made for a national and international tour of the exhibition.

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